

# North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook

National Interagency Fire Center • Natural Resources Canada • Servicio Meteorológico Nacional  
United States Canada Mexico

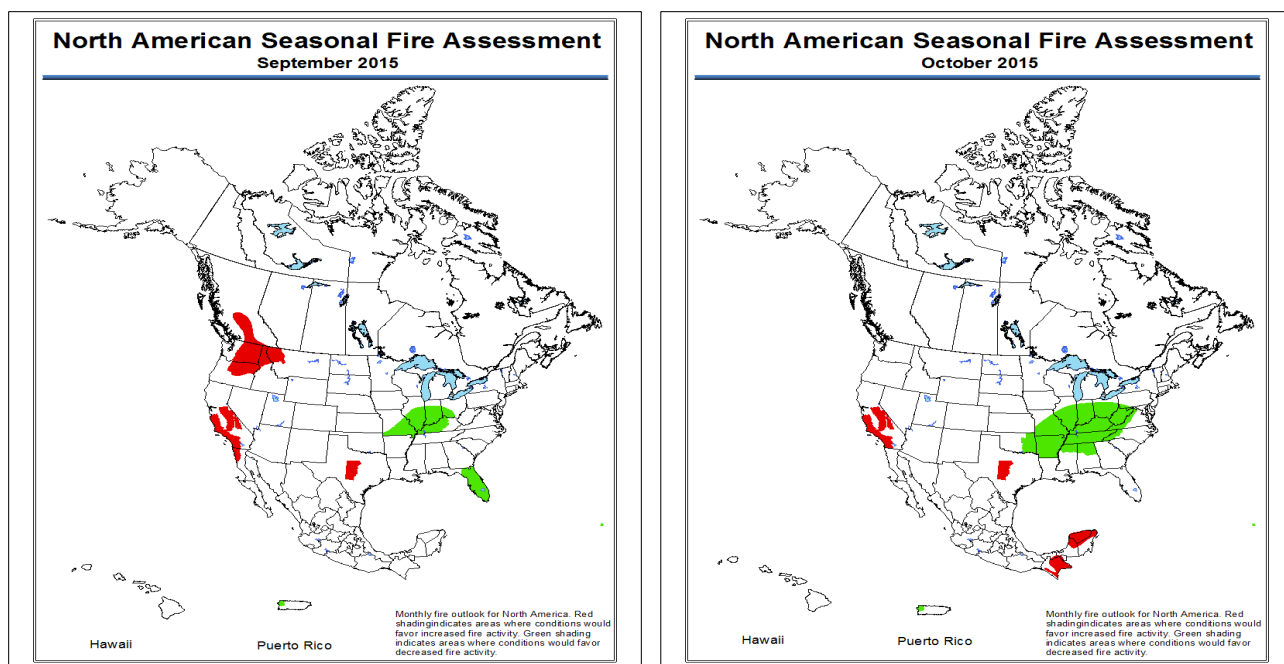
## Outlook Period –September and October 2015

Issued on 10 September 2015

### Executive Summary

The seasonal fire outlook for September suggests conditions are favorable for continued wildland fire activity in Canada in southwestern British Columbia. In the United States, conditions are favorable for continued wildland fire activity across central and eastern Washington; northeastern Oregon; northern Idaho; northwestern Montana; and coastal mountains and the Sierras of southern California. Conditions are favorable for a decrease in wildland fire activity across the Mid-Mississippi Valley. In Mexico, conditions remain favorable for wildland fire activity over northern Baja California.

The seasonal fire outlook for October suggests conditions will remain favorable for continued wildland fire activity along the coastal mountains and the Sierras of southern California. Conditions are favorable for a decrease in wildland fire activity across the Mid-Mississippi Valley and most of the Ohio and Tennessee Valleys. In Mexico, conditions remain favorable wildland fire activity over parts of the Yucatan Peninsula and in the southern state of Chiapas. By October, Canada is out of fire season.



Monthly fire outlook for North America for September (left) and October (right). Red shading indicates areas where conditions would favor increased fire activity. Green shading indicates areas where conditions would favor decreased fire activity.



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## Critical Factors

The critical factors influencing significant fire potential for this outlook period are:

**El Niño-Southern Oscillation:** El Niño conditions (warming of the equatorial Pacific Ocean) are forecast to continue strengthening into the fall. Although fire season is on the decline across most of Canada and the U.S., parts of the western U.S. and Mexico could still have significant fires. ENSO conditions over the fall and winter months will affect precipitation patterns that will have an impact on how next year's fire season develops.

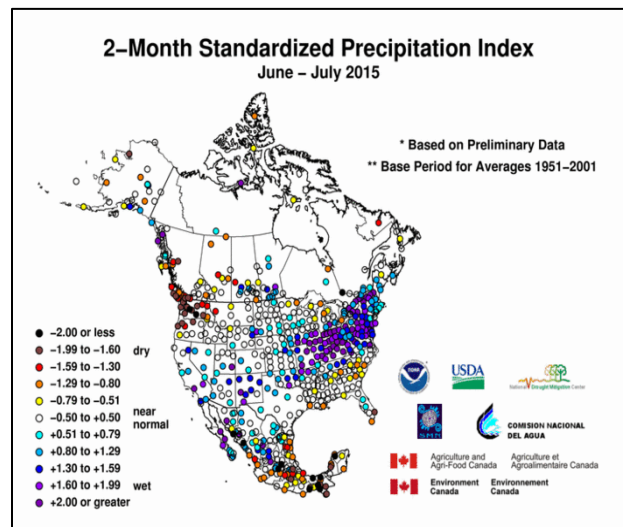
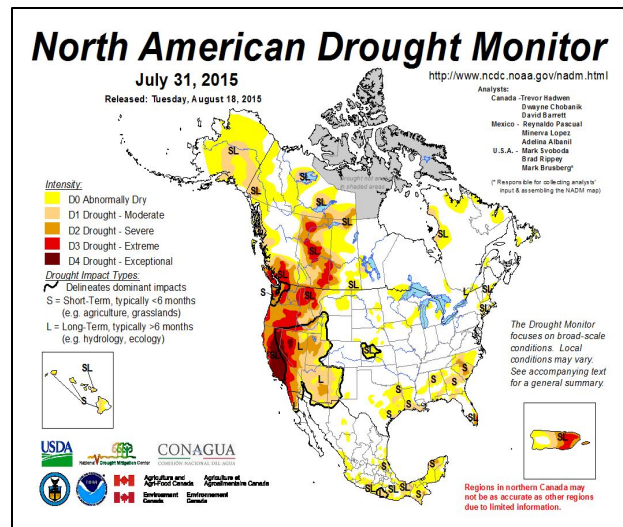
**Drought:** The North American Drought Monitor from 30 July 2015 (top right) shows severe to exceptional drought over most of the western U.S. with the worst conditions in California, western Nevada, southern Oregon, and parts of northern Baja California. Pockets of severe to extreme drought exist in southern British Columbia, much of Alberta, and southwestern Saskatchewan. Small pockets of severe drought exist in southern Mexico.

**Fire Season Status:** An unusually strong fall-like storm brought widespread heavy precipitation to much of southwestern Canada and northwestern U.S. during late August and early September. Fuels condition moderated over much of the area, leaving only pockets of high fire danger in south central British Columbia, parts of Oregon, Washington, northern Idaho and northwestern Montana. Several large fires remain across the region but weather and fuels conditions have greatly reduced fire activity. Transition to fall should further reduce fire danger through September. Dry conditions remain over central and southern California and northwestern Baja California. Rainy season conditions will continue over northern Mexico, the southern border and the Yucatan. Wildfires continue normal for the period.

## Canada Discussion

**September:** Fall conditions are expected to cover most of Canada in September. Brief warm periods early in the month will raise fire danger across parts of southern British Columbia, but these will be short-lived as the transition to cooler and wetter fall conditions continues.

**October:** Out-of-season conditions will prevail as the transition to fall and winter continues.



**Top:** North American Drought Monitor from 31 July 2015. **Bottom:** 2-month Standardized Precipitation Index for June-July 2015. (Both from U.S. National Centers for Environmental Information, NCEI/NOAA)

## United States Discussion

**September:** Fire potential will remain high early in the month across the Pacific Northwest and the far northern U.S. Rockies. However, shorter burn periods, increasing wet storms and fewer opportunities for ignitions will mark a decrease in new fire activity across the region. The approach of fall weather also marks a potential increase in fire activity across southern California as the probability of offshore wind events increases in September. The interior West continues its typical decline in fire activity. A return to wetter conditions across the southern U.S. as El Niño patterns continue to peak will greatly reduce fire potential over most of southern and eastern U.S.

**October:** The potential for significant wildfires remains high across southern California as the seasonal threat of offshore wind events continues. However, potential will decrease across the Sierras and the central coastal ranges as precipitation chances increase with typical rainy season enhanced by developing El Niño conditions. Wet weather is also expected of much of the eastern and southern U.S., reducing the threat of fire activity during the month.

## Mexico Discussion

**September:** Precipitation is expected to increase again in September for much of northern Mexico, central and southern Baja California, and along the southern border of Mexico. Elsewhere, through northern Baja California, central and western Mexico, and the Yucatan Peninsula, precipitation is expected to be below normal. Seasonal rains and transient phenomena such as tropical cyclones will keep fuels moist over most of the country. However, dry conditions in northern Baja California could see an increase in fire activity.

**October:** Precipitation anomalies are expected to be positive across most of Mexico in October with the exception of parts of north central and northwestern Mexico, parts of Baja California, and pockets of the Yucatan Peninsula and along the Chiapas border. While October typically marks the end of the rainy season, it is expected that fuels across most of Mexico will have sufficient moisture to keep wildfire occurrence normal with some increase possible over parts of the Baja California and the Yucatan Peninsula.

## Additional Information

Additional and supplemental information for this outlook can be obtained at:

United States:

National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook

[http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/monthly\\_seasonal\\_outlook.pdf](http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf)

Canada:

Canadian Wildland Fire Information System

<http://cwfis.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/home>

Mexico:

Servicio Meteorológico Nacional

[http://smn.cna.gob.mx/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=156&Itemid=113](http://smn.cna.gob.mx/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=156&Itemid=113)

## Outlook Objective

The North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook is a general discussion of conditions that will affect the occurrence of wildland fires across Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Wildland fire is a natural part of many ecosystems across North America. This document provides a broad assessment of those factors that will contribute to an increase or decrease of seasonal fire activity. The objective is to assist wildland fire managers prepare for the potential variations in a typical fire

season. It is not intended as a prediction of where and when wildland fires will occur nor is it intended to suggest any area is safe from the hazards of wildfire.

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